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TRIPLE R

THE PRINCESS VS. THE POWER ELITE

Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

Conservatives tend to bemoan every mass event as a sure sign of cultural collapse. This is the posture they adopted in the days following the death of Princess Diana. They were the debunkers of an alleged media hysteria, but their instincts were wrong, even perverse. It was a sure sign of the bankruptcy of modern conservative thought, and why it stands a zero chance of future success in public life.

The entire Western world was in mourning for the untimely and deeply tragic death of a beautiful aristocrat, a princess of an ancient Christian monarchy who lived out a fascinating morality play involving universal themes. As the mourning grew, and the global outpouring reached a fevered pitch, people ignored the pronouncements of politicians and their desperate attempt to change the subject. Suddenly, after Diana died, no one cared that Congress was in session, that a Haitian immigrant was beaten in New York, that there were new developments in Mideast politics, or that Alexander Lebed claimed that a hundred suitcase-sized atom bombs were missing in Russia. Diana was all that mattered.

Rather than celebrate this magnificent defiance of political correctness–under which our lives are supposed to be consumed by political goings-on and nothing so serious and real as mourning–conservatives swung into action. Don Feder decried the public's obsession with Diana, "a vacuous symbol for a vacuous age." Stephen Chapman denounced the "homage to an anachronism." Charles Krauthammer bemoaned that people who had never "exchanged a word with Diana, or even a glance," felt "inexpressible grief," a fact he found "puzzling." Emmett Tyrrell called the global grief a product of "the fantasy world of media hype" that "encourages such frenzy." George Will argued, in circular fashion, that she was merely a "celebrity"–the catch-all word to explain the public's reaction–known only for "her well-knownness."

Matthew Scully pooh-poohed "the long roll of faraway fawners who succumbed to the Diana lure." Instead, we should "interrupt our worship" to grieve over "one of the truly great people of the century," 92-year-old shrink Viktor Frankl, who died two days after Diana. Indeed, Frankl's theories enable us to understand the public grief for Diana as a hunger "for excitement," in which "the greatest possible sensation is death."

Where does Scully get this stuff? There's no evidence that anybody found the death of Diana "exciting," or was in any sense titillated by it. Tragic is the right word, a word invoked a million times after her death to describe the destruction of a princess.

Never in my life has an event shaken people to such a wave of soul-searching seriousness. More than a million were present for her funeral, and not an atheist, at least at that moment, among them. For an hour-long procession, they stood in perfect silence, so that only the clip-clop of horses' hoofs could be heard in the streets of London. The silence was broken as a million people said the Lord's Prayer together with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a third of the human race through television.

And think of this: in the week between her death and her funeral, no jokes circulated about Diana's death –on the Internet, in private conversation, or anywhere else. These are times when everything is subject to cruel

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INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

What secrets, Orrin? Sen. Hatch, the national socialist from Utah, has written a song about his friendship with Teddy Kennedy. The lyrics include these lines: "I was scared to trust my heart–your eyes told me you knew./We are souls along the way–in my heart you stay./You know my secrets, I have cried your pain." (*N.Y. Post*, Sept. 9, 1997)

Thank goodness for the *Drudge Report*, published on the Internet by one guy in an LA apartment. Matt Drudge's long string of scoops looks good even compared to multi-billion dollar media outfits. He also performs the service of scouring the mainstream media and highlighting things people might actually care about. For instance: the photo of Clinton wearing an Afro-wig, taken at a drunken party, presided over by the band "The Boogies," while on vacation at Martha's Vineyard. It is "arguably the most undignified picture in the history of the presidency," *Drudge* reports a *Washington Post* article saying (Sept. 8, 1997). Is this a disgrace to the institution of the presidency? Yes. That's why real Americans should celebrate. And celebrate Clinton's downfall too: after all, this is a man who was "boogieing down" in the hours between Mother Teresa's death and Princess Diana's funeral. (http://www.drudgereport.com)

What else don't we know about Africa? Now it transpires that the late CIA dictator Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngebendu wa za Banga of the late Zaire (the man whose adopted name means "the cockerel who covers every chick in the yard") had a ceremonial bodyguard consisting of "pygmies in Napoleonic cavalry uniforms, high boots, and plumed hats." (London *Times*, Sept. 9. 1997)

We heard a Republican House leader on Michael Reagan's radio talk show the other day endorsing voucher welfare. He's long been rumored to be a dipsomaniac, and we aren't supposed to begrudge these birds a few drinks after a hard day of living off the taxpayer, but really, tha' wa' too mush.

***Reason* Magazine once had a "Special Revisionism Issue," our own** George Resch reminds us. Articles in the Feb. 1976 number included "The Framing of 'Tokyo Rose'" by James J. Martin, "FDR's Watergate: Pearl Harbor" by Percy L. Greaves, Jr., "The Pearl Harbor Cover-Up" by Bruce Bartlett, "The Sudeten-German Tragedy" by Austin J. App, "World War II Revisionism and Vietnam" by Gary North, "U.S. Interventions: Aberrations or Empire" by William Marina, "The Lusitania" by Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, and much else.

"Walt Disney Studios' latest piece of trash, 'GI Jane,' is a new cultural low," writes London *Sunday Times* columnist Taki (Aug. 24, 1997). "The film depicts Demi Moore as the first female Navy Seal." Predictably, she is "harassed by sadistic officers, jeered at by dull-witted grunts, but ends up tougher, more foul-mouthed, and a better warrior than any man." Yet "not one second of the film is even remotely true. Throughout the American military, physical standards have been lowered to accommodate the weaker sex to such a degree that men feel demoralized at not being pushed enough. Pull-ups, forced marches with rifles and backpack have been all but eliminated; in their place come pursuits in which women can be sure to do well: map reading, orientation, and so one. So physically helpless are women that the military is in the process of introducing new equipment. Lighter hand grenades so the little women avoid getting blown up themselves; lighter rifles so the little ones can carry them."

That means the U.S. military has three priorities: promoting blacks; promoting women; and fighting wars. We can't feel good about PC run wild, but anything that makes it more difficult for the U.S. government to kill people is a blessing.

"Armies in time of peace are allowed on all hands to be an evil," said James Madison at the Constitutional Convention. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and later John Adams's Treasurer of the U.S. Mint, proposed

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in 1792 that two mottoes be written above the entrance to the Department of War: "An office for butchering the human species" and "A Widow and Orphan making office." (*The Family in America*, Sept. 1997)

Congressman Ron Paul, to the consternation of the "pro-life" barons of his party, introduced an amendment to one of the foreign aid bills banning the use of taxpayer dollars for population control, family planning, and abortions. You can't do that, said one famous "pro-life" committee chairman: that's isolationism. The measure failed, but Ron had 147 supporters, who helped generate more anti-foreign aid sentiment in the House. He added: "'Thomas Jefferson once said that 'to compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of ideas he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical.'" And isn't that the U.S. government in a nutshell?

Ron also continued his war on the UN by pointing out that UN accounting is as fraudulent as the rest of that monstrous organization. The UN claims that the American taxpayers owe it $1.3 billion. In fact, the UN owes us $3.5 billion. But not collecting that would be a small price to pay for getting the U.S. out of the UN, and the UN out of the U.S., in the old John Birch Society slogan.

Another racial racket at Denny's, this time involving Asians. After Denny's settled a $46 million class-action suit brought by blacks, others have tried to get in on the act. In Syracuse, N.Y., a large group of drunken Asians barreled in demanding an immediate table. They were told they had to wait if they wanted to sit together. Meanwhile, smaller groups of white patrons were seated. When the Asians began shouting obscenities at the hostess, they were kicked out, and then began fighting with white patrons. After their arrest, they filed suit. But it turns out the whole thing was a setup (just like the prior racial incidents), and the D.A. refused to prosecute, as he should have. But don't light the candles on the cake just yet. It also proves that rationality is only selectively applicable when it comes to claims of victimhood. (CNN, September 5, 1997)

Hardly any movies are worth seven bucks, but "Conspiracy Theory" with Mel Gibson is an exception. It's a superb defense of the idea that the truth about government is far more complex than it first appears. Jerry Fletcher, the cab driver, has a theory about everything: about the New Money (the government can trace it), the Masons (behind the presidency), the militia movement (NWO backers in disguise), flouride (it "makes you a slave to the state"), the Vatican (the real problem in the Church today), and, of course, black helicopters. But just when you think he's crazy, he is tortured for revealing a truth to the five subscribers to his newsletter. The wild ride that ensues reveals a conspiracy so broad and malicious that not even he could have imagined its full extent. Jerry's downfall, it turns out, is that he is not paranoid *enough*.

In the course of the film, the *New American* magazine gets some free publicity, political murders are an ongoing reality, and the CIA gets a drumming like never before. In one particularly poignant passage, Jerry explains to a Justice Department lawyer who he means by "they." They are represented by many groups with initials like FBI, CIA, and the IMF. There are two groups vying for control of these institutions: old families with a great deal of wealth who want stability ("at least that's what they call it") and well-connected upstarts who want instability. The battle between the two results in hot wars and cold wars and other forms of havoc in society, while the rest of us are forced to sit back and powerlessly watch society go down the tubes. That one passage explains the many negative reviews the movie has received. Neocon Michael Medved, for example, called it "dangerous." Indeed, and in all the right ways.

In 1996, the federal government issued 2,439 new permits for bureaucrats to carry taxpayer-supplied firearms. It's a record one-year surge, bringing the total of armed agents to some 50,000. Most of the new permits are for the EPA, reports Sarah Foster of WorldNetDaily. The EPA motto: You have to spill some blood to save the environment. (*Between the Lines*, Aug. 15, 1997)

The UN wants to inspect alleged nuclear facilities in Iraq, and is willing to desecrate Christian sites to do it. This summer, an inspection team raided a Chaldean-rite Catholic Church, ordering a wall to the attached convent to be broken down, and then scanned the burial grounds where children were putting flowers on graves. The head of the Chaldean Church sent a letter of protest to the UN. Anti-Iraq operative Rolf Ekeus acknowledged a "big mistake," but still refuses to take responsibility. The reality is a huge contrast to the usual line, wherein Iraq violates Christian rights and the UN guarantees them. (*Catholic World Report*, Aug./Sept. 1997)

The Catholic parish in Boerne, Texas, that brought suit in federal court—under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act—to expand its sanctuary in violation of local zoning codes has at last been settled. It reached an agreement with the City Council that it would not demolish its traditional structure but would build on in a way consonant with local architectural traditions. This is the way all such disputes should be settled—at the local level. Instead, the church had originally taken the case to the Supreme Court, invoking an outrageous law that should have

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never passed in the first place. The RFRA violates every principle of federalism. For example, it would have made it impossible for localities to stop the building of any church, synagogue, mosque, or Satanic coven's operation, including homeless shelters, in your own now-safe subdivision. Despite the correct Supreme Court decision striking down RFRA, boneheaded Republicans still defend the law as a heroic protection of religious rights (which supposedly override the right to self-government). The politically naive Christian right went along, despite the law's obvious unconstitutionality. (*N.Y. Times*, Aug. 14, 1997)

Flacks from both parties (you know who you are) are attempting to take credit for the present economic environment (which is still rotten by historic standards). Still, a CNN poll found that 78 percent of Americans give credit to business, not politicians, for the low rate of joblessness and the decline in the official inflation rate.

Gulf War syndrome turns out to be a reality, not the myth that military apologists were claiming it to be. It is most likely a consequence of exposure to chemical weapons. Moreover, before the Gulf War, a report raising the specter of risk was available to both Norman Schwarzkopf, American hero, and Colin Powell, ditto. The Pentagon says they didn't see the report due to a "routing" error. Then lots of other files "disappeared," and thousands of soldiers were exposed. Imagine if this were a private business. It would be shut down for maltreatment of workers, but in the military, as in all of government, life proceeds as normal. Hey, what does it matter that soldiers were poisoned when Rockefeller oil reserves were at stake? (*USA Today*, Aug. 15, 1997).

Joe Sobran defines bigotry as "practicing anthropology without a license." To avoid the charge himself, he stipulates that "the whole human race is basically Swedish." (Creators Syndicate, Aug. 29, 1997)

It's become *de rigeur* among Republican presidential hopefuls, Gingrich excepted, to denounce the budget deal. Forbes hates it. So does Quayle. But while Forbes denounced its tax increases, Quayle decried the tax break for children, which he called "social engineering at its worst." Didn't this guy used to be for free enterprise, or claimed to be anyway? What precisely is wrong with people being allowed to keep their own money? Three cheers for loopholes. That Quayle doesn't understand this is a very bad omen. The contest is still on for whom the *Triple R* should hate the most among the contenders (aside from Kemp and Gingrich), but the neocon-controlled Quayle is right up there near the top.

Goodbye, VMI. So long, Citadel. They've both lost their essential character, though, of course, it's not the fault of either. But what the government destroys, the private sector must reinvent. So say hello to The Southern Military Institute, soon to be founded by alumni of those two institutions and set up in Northern Alabama. They've already raised $100 million. SMI may begin enrolling cadets as early as 2004. It will be all-male, pro-Confederate, and highly politically incorrect. (CNN, August 19, 1997).

Meanwhile, Alabama is once again in the crosshairs of the central state. It seems that the one Jewish kid in the Pike County school district says he was harassed and subjected to anti-Semitic slurs. It's his word against the school's, but it's interesting to think of the timing here. Gov. Fob James is the subject of a media hate campaign right now for having denounced a federal judge and explaining the correct view of the Bill of Rights to him (it applies to the feds, not the states). The anti-Semitic line of attack follows the usual establishment course when a state falls out of line. Gov. James is, quite possibly, the best governor among the fifty.

Perhaps, then, there should be a movement founded to persuade Fob James to run for president. Then again, that tactic represents the politics of yesterday. Why waste the talents of a principled statesman like James on a rotten institution like the presidency? That office should be held by lesser men who deserve the fate of being president. Gov. James is where he should be, a more morally prestigious and honorable post than the presidency has been in a long time.

Still wailing about the blacklist, by which a few commies lost money, the *New York Times* (Aug. 20, 1997) holds up for our pity and approbation victim Alfred Palca. Although he wrote and produced "Go, Man, Go!" a very bad movie about the sainted Abe Saperstein's Harlem Globetrotters, he could not have his name on it because the FBI said he was a communist. That, of course, was a smear. "'I'm an old lefty and I thought I could do something to help the blacks.'" After all, "'politically I would do anything I could to help society.'" And "'I was for the underdog'" and "'I liked that story'" and "'thought it had a basic commercial nut.'"

"Mr. Palca said that as a young man living in New York and Los Angeles, writing for television shows and comedians, 'I joined all kinds of organizations, signed all kinds of things.' He said he had been attracted by the Soviet Union's socialist ideals" because "'I thought of it as a sharing society.' But he was never a communist." "'Maybe we gave money to Russian war relief or something,' said his wife." But not to worry. John Scher, producer of the transvestite-glorifying "Victor, Victoria," is

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bringing "Go, Man, Go!" to Broadway in just a few months.

"As Washington becomes less important in the lives of Americans, the people who live here have to work harder and grimmer to convince themselves that they really matter," says James Glassman. "Public officials, journalists and lobbyists seem to have little demons perched on their shoulders, whispering, 'Look busy. Otherwise, they'll figure out you're not important anymore.' The private sector has so eclipsed the federal that Washington is left mainly with the power to obstruct, complicate, and confuse. This is a good thing, a liberating development for the country–but not for the people who live here." (*Wash. Post*, Aug. 19, 1997) In another column, Glassman writes again of "Washington's growing irrelevance–and the frustration of the pundit and political classes at their inability to wrest attention from Bill Gates and Tiger Woods." (July 29, 1997)

Is Bill Buckley going soft on communism? You judge. "The Nazis had a palpable goal, the elimination of the non-Aryan race. The communists had, if only intermittently, the goal of eliminating the bourgeois and the kulaks. Mostly the Gulag slaughters were idiosyncratically motivated, an expression of the insecurity and malevolence of Stalin and his successors and their dependence on slave labor. The killings at the war front don't figure in this attempt at moral reckoning–they were simply what happens when Country A goes to war against Country B." (*Conservative Chronicle*, Aug. 20, 1997.)

The heroic Charley Reese predicts that environmentalism will be undone–due to its promotion of disease. "Environmentalists want to preserve swamps and create more. They now call them wetlands, and they are sacred. They are also the places where mosquitoes breed, not only those which are carriers of malaria but also those which carry yellow fever (you really don't want old yellow jack to come back), dengue, or breakbone fever, and encephalitis. Environmentalists also don't want to spray pesticides. But it was the draining of swamps and the spraying of pesticides that ended the terrible toll malaria once exacted from Americans." (*Con. Chron.*, Aug. 20, 1997)

Libertarians have always been their own worst enemies. It's a practical, not philosophical, problem, that leads them to confuse liberty with license and downplay statism (of all things). Sometimes-right columnist Don Feder, for example, was alarmed to discover that a guest of honor at the Cato Institute's 20th anniversary celebration was John Stagliano, a.k.a The Buttman, described by *U.S. News and World Report* as "a veritable United Artists of Porn." That leads Feder to conclude: "Conservatives who lie down with libertarians are apt to rise up smelling of marijuana and body oil." (*Con. Chron.*, Aug. 20, 1997) But Don, make that *some* libertarians. And some conservatives too.

We like to point out the use of the passive voice when the media are discussing events that reflect negatively on members of official victim groups. For example, inner-city residents are always "trapped in poverty" or "plagued by drugs." The newest example is from a *Washington Post* report revealing that, in one three month period, half of D.C.'s black men between the ages of 18 and 35 committed crimes. The headline: "Young Blacks Entangled in Legal System." (Aug. 27, 1997)

TV was a great thing to have on hand during three periods in our epoch: the LA riots, the OJ Bronco chase; and the Diana funeral. Other than that, every set should be destroyed. When is someone going to come up with a pay-per-view cable system whereby we are only charged for the time we watch anything? And down with ABC, which recently wrote a weird ad arguing that: "TV binds us together.... Let us climb the highest figurative mountaintop and proclaim, with all the vigor and shrillness that made Roseanne a household name, that TV is good."

Gen. Butt Naked, who led his Butt Naked Battalion–nude except for shoes and guns–in Liberia's tribal wars on behalf of Roosevelt Johnson, says he's changed his ways. Now he's fully clothed and running the Soul-Winning Evangelistic Ministry. No more Devil-worship–he belonged to a Satanic cult that required ritual sacrifices of small children and nudity on the battlefield–and no more using the heads of his victims in soccer games. And no more diving under a group of swimming children, pulling one under, and breaking his neck. Cassettes of his sermons are $20 each. (CNN, Aug. 3, 1997)

Steal this book! Well, no, since we don't adhere to Jerry Rubin's infamous injunction. Just don't buy it. For according to the new *Webster's College Dictionary* from Random House, one purpose of language is "rectifying the unequal social status between one group and another." To bring this about, you must avoid "emphasizing the differences between people." (Nat Hentoff, *Wash. Post*, Sept. 10, 1997)

A tin ear combined with stupidity is also a problem, points out Hentoff. In the Contemporary English Version of the Bible, "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin" is rendered as "Look how the wildflowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes." "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" becomes, in the New Century version, "But why are people important to you?" RRR

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wit. Nothing is sacred. But, suddenly, this was, and remains so.

Where's the vice in this? Where have these conservative writers gone wrong? They looked upon the most conservative and even reactionary public event of modern times–and quite possibly of our century–and pronounced it a fraud. They have become so politicized and absorbed by government and official opinion that they're incapable of recognizing, much less appreciating, what a magnificent repudiation of secular leftism the Diana phenomenon represents.

The core moral doctrine of our time is moral egalitarianism: all people are equally valuable, so we should have no more attachment to some than others. Princesses are not to be valued more than paupers. We are to be as stricken by massacres in Africa as by deaths in our own family. We are to care just as intensely about the plight of women in Afghanistan as about our children's progress in school. Volcanoes in Montserrat are just as important as floods in Nebraska.

Above all, we are not to uphold members of the natural elite–royalty, nobles, great scholars, successful entrepreneurs–as somehow worth more than any bum on the street. Of course there are exceptions to the rule. When government officials are killed, we are supposed to feel extra outrage and sympathy. This especially applies to federal "law-enforcement" officers killed in the "line of duty." This is why there are extra penalties in federal law for killing one as versus a taxpayer.

One commentator on NPR was particular annoyed that the grief shown toward Diana's death far surpassed the sadness at the Oklahoma City bombing. What an outrage that people feel worse about the death of a princess than of a Social Security worker. Sure, Diana's children are left without a mother; so are many children in the inner city, who fall through the social safety net thanks to federal budget cuts. Why should Diana matter any more than they do?

The Diana phenomenon is a magnificent repudiation of secular leftism.

Well, for one reason, because of the natural law. We cannot value all people equally. We certainly can't admire civil servants or gun-wielding regulators just because they work for the government. The remnants of the monarchical cast of mind–the love of the natural elite–cause us to have a greater reverence for princesses, especially when they wield no power. As in 1935, when the citizens of Brussels wept openly in the streets upon the news that their queen died in an accident, so millions the world over did so, and continue to do so, on the death of the princess whom Taki of *The* (London) *Spectator* called the most beautiful woman in the world. How pleasing to know that the constant drumbeat of egalitarian ideology hasn't changed this impulse.

Many commentators denounced the fact that newspapers kept up their relentless Diana reporting even after suicide bombers had killed people in Israel, thereby complicating the "peace process" for the zillionth time. But why should it surprise anyone that the horrible death of a beautiful English princess would touch us more deeply than the everlasting eye-for-eye politics of the Middle East?

Moreover, the Diana phenomenon was not merely a product of a media frenzy. Indeed, for days after the crash, the papers and radios kept trying to change the subject. Talk radio hosts like Rush Limbaugh, usually sensitive to their listeners, tried to get people to gab about Congress, about Gore, about Clinton. But callers had only one thing on their mind. And so it was for newspapers. They were pressured by the demands of their readers to run page after page, section after section, on Diana.

Historical egalitarianism was also smashed by the Diana phenomenon. Historians tell us that there are no heros anymore. Maybe never were. Certainly we shouldn't celebrate great capitalists and entrepreneurs; we need to focus on lowly workers or even welfare spongers as the "real" stuff of history. The history of monarchs and framers and other "great men" is irrelevant. Real history consists in reading the writings of third-world feminists and jailed Native American poets.

In recent years, European history has been nearly driven from the curriculum. Students today know almost nothing about it, and therefore our culture's own past. The academic elites tell us we shouldn't care about the internal family struggles of princely dynasties. The history of kings and queens and dukes is irrelevant. The details of their private lives shouldn't matter in the slightest, at least as compared to the glorious tale of labor unions and civil rights under democracy.

Despite all this indoctrination, the anti-historical egalitarianism was swept aside in an instant. In America, seventy-five books were already in print on Diana–a number which will hugely increase over the coming months–and they were sold out of bookstores within 24 hours of her death. Far from being the end of the English monarchy, the Diana phenomenon could mean its revival, and the revival of interest in the idea of

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monarchy the world over. Wilson thought he had abolished the monarchical impulse in the First World War. Yet it's back with a vengeance.

It hardly matters that Diana herself spent the last few years needling the British Royal Family (which was, after all, the whole point of her affair with the Egyptian immigrant Dodi Fayed). The reason for her fame was not that she was a "regular person," as so many claim. There are plenty of regular people out there to love. The necessary condition was that Diana, who came from aristocratic stock, was adopted by marriage into the Royal Family. And like monarchs of old, who really did aspire to be beloved by regular people, she exhibited behaviors and emotions people could identify with. All of history's truly great monarchs were both royal and populist in their outlook.

Diana might have intended to harm the Royal Family, but she understood a truth about successful monarchies that the House of Windsor is now beginning to comprehend. "In popular imagination," writes Bertrand de Jouvenel, "a monarchy keeps its employments for the nobles and excludes them from the common people. In fact the exact opposite happens; it endures the services of the great only so far as it stays under aristocratic tutelage; but it calls on the services of the common people so far as it aims at becoming absolute."

Royalty is supposed to embody the soul of the country and nation, excluding no class from its affections—not for reasons of equality, but on the belief that every soul is in God's care. Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn notes that before the Reformation, Catholic monarchs all over Europe were obliged to wash the feet of commoners on Maundy Thursday. Afterwards the king or emperor would invite beggars and old men from the paupers' asylum to the palace for dinner, served by the queen and her ladies-in-waiting. After Henry VIII founded the Church of England, however, the English monarchy refused to subject itself to such humbling practices, and instead handed out pennies to the poor.

Conservatives object to the life Diana lived, as exemplified by the unseemly circumstances of her death. But that's no secret. More obvious is that the wages for her sins were paid in the most horrible manner. She made bad choices and paid the ultimate price. But in Christian civilization, to see virtue turned to vice doesn't lessen our affections for a person, especially when there are mitigating circumstances that complicate those bad choices. In the end, however, it wasn't her faults that were celebrated but her virtues. In the end, it wasn't fashion designers and celebrities who marched in her funeral procession, but the heads of charities she was inspired to back under the influence of Mother Teresa.

Diana's focus on the landmine issue was entirely legitimate, and it drove the U.S. government crazy.

Conservatives also object that Diana backed causes perceived as leftist. It's true that she seized on politically correct issues like Aids, probably because she had close ties to people especially vulnerable to the disease (some people think those ties were even familial). But then again, which political party devoted a prime-time, hour-long speech at its national convention calling for more money for Aids? The Republicans. And whatever Diana said on the subject, Orrin Hatch has far surpassed in sappiness and victimology.

Moreover, Diana's focus on the landmine issue was entirely legitimate, and it drove the brain-dead British Tories and the U.S. government crazy. Most every landmine presently alive in the world has been put there by the U.S. empire. It's hardly surprising that the U.S. is the most resistant of any government to signing a treaty to severely restrict their use. Yet not a day goes by that peasant farmers and their wives and children don't have their legs blown off by U.S. landmines in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, and a host of other beneficiaries of the world's only superpower.

Since when has it been conservative doctrine that the U.S. government has a right to place killer mines anywhere in the world? On this, Diana was exactly right, and her feelings about the issue were genuine. Landmines *are* an evil, and it's good that someone has finally said so. How many lives will be saved if they are banned? And if they are not banned, are conservatives willing to take responsibility for the killing and maiming of innocents that will continue?

Of course, it is not Diana's politics that drives the public affection for her. Precisely the opposite: it was her nonpolitical character in a hyper-politicized age. Above all, we are captivated by her beauty, poise, grace, charm, and demure and, yes, deeply conservative persona. Even in her divorce, Diana was perceived to be the innocent victim of a loveless marriage, and her later misdeeds were excused as a reaction to the sad fate that befell her. This is a classic story, one told from antiquity. Diana's life attracts us for its enduring themes, not its postmodern quality. This is what is meant by the word "fairytale" used to describe her

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life. What are fairytales? They are poignant and dramatic stories about the working out of the natural law, which is why the left hates them, and why we remember them from childhood.

What a contrast the fairytale is to the feminist and leftist cultural ideology that is supposed to govern our likes and dislikes. There wasn't a feminist bone in Diana's body, and she rejected feminism at a time when old standards of beauty are said to be patriarchal and ethnocentric.

Who is to say, in these days of anti-lookism, that Diana was more beautiful than Hillary or Eleanor Holmes Norton? Royal graces are not supposed to matter. We are supposed to love the grunge look, extol *chutzpah*, and admire women who have made it on their own terms in a man's world.

We live in a time when every clothing catalog in the mail is filled with multicultural displays, as if by national decree. *Newsweek* "morphs" a female of all races on its cover, and then tells us to be agog at her beauty. Hollywood fills its movies with very strange looking types, whose faces we are supposed to admire. Diana has undone decades of these attempts to reconstruct our innate aesthetic sense.

Custom too is supposed to be out. Demureness is a thing of the past. Women are not supposed to be "wronged" by adultery; they are supposed to be committing it, *Cosmopolitan*-style. The women we love are supposed to be career types, with brains and ambition, not innocent, young princesses from, yes, fairytales.

The look and story of Diana ran contrary to all these modern demands. And the unprecedented display of affection for her proved that the power elite has made little progress in updating our traditional ideals of womanly beauty, of what it means to be a lady, much less the role of the natural elite in public life. Every politician on the planet was suddenly struck with the reality that his death would not call forth the tiniest part of the response.

The global wave of reactionary sentiment was capped in her funeral service, the most public Christian ceremony in half a century. Despite the leftism of the Anglican church, at least the hierarchy still knows how to put on a magnificent and traditional liturgy. And this takes place at a time when every manner of corruption has entered liturgies in all churches. We're supposed to dance, kiss, share, and swoon, everything but focus on the eternal reason we're there.

We saw the powerlessness of politics when confronted with a mass outpouring of public passion.

Diana's funeral was a solemn occasion in the ancient tradition. Nothing less would do for a princess. Then, we must ask, why should we accept less in our Sunday services? The movement for a restoration of solemnity in liturgy needs a revival, and this funeral has provided it. It may even have converted some souls.

There was another effect too: the funeral demonstrated to the world that England, indeed the West, is rooted in Christianity, which is still the faith of the overwhelming majority. This display, coupled with the astounding and sudden death of Mother Teresa, could have cultural repercussions for years to come. The coincidence set back the cause of religious relativism, and the Christian haters in the media and official culture.

For decades we've been told that it's bigoted to hold to a single faith. All faiths are sure to blend into a universal religion centering on love of man, not outmoded ideas like sin, penance, redemption, salvation, Heaven, and Hell. Every public religious occasion in the U.S. has become a disgusting display of ecumenical skepticism, with a smattering of representatives from every religion. If there's a Christian presence, there'd better darn sure be a Buddhist and a Wicca presence as well. Who's to say one religion is right and others wrong?

The most updated moment of Diana's funeral came with Elton John's rendition of "Candle in the Wind." But whatever that song's problems, the new words spoke of beauty, sadness, and Heaven, thereby repudiating the central teaching of our time, that there is no purpose to life other than the here and now, and certainly no Heaven, as John Lennon said.

The glory of the Diana phenomenon is in its non-political nature. But it does illustrate a point that is profoundly relevant for our political future: the powerlessness of politics when confronted with a mass outpouring of public passion. Every government and every politician in the world was pushed off the front page, and out of the public mind, in an instant.

The Diana phenomenon demonstrates that the sentiment of regular people—their emotions, priorities, and loves, their attachment to traditional standards of beauty and faith, and their affection for the ancient human drama of life and tragic death—is more powerful than any special interest, however mighty it may appear otherwise. When regular people unite for a cause, in this case the effective canonization of a princess—and perhaps someday the

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exaltation of our right to liberty against the mandates of the world managers—no power on earth can stop them.

Contrary to the posture of official conservatives, and all the others who have denounced the sadness of real people, the Diana phenomenon is not phony or manufactured. It is that rare occasion in public life when something is so real, so genuine and right, that not even a conspiracy of governments and their courtier press could kill it or even diminish its significance. RRR

SHOULD WE HATE THE HABSBURGS?

Paul Gottfried

For decades, every classical liberal, even the most die-hard republican, had a soft spot in his heart for the House of Habsburg. It was the last multinational monarchy to survive the onslaught of social democracy, until it was cruelly destroyed in Woodrow Wilson's maniacal world war. The House of Habsburg conjured up images of a better time, when liberty was valued more than democracy, when family and honor mattered, and when government power was restricted by tradition and morality.

But no tenet of classical-liberal philosophy—whether property rights, meritocracy, or federalism—can be taken for granted in a political environment dominated by neoconservative ideological improvisation. So it was only a matter of time before the Habsburgs themselves would come in for a flailing far more severe than would be tolerated on the subject of the managerial state.

The occasion of the attack was the 15th anniversary of the Ludwig von Mises Institute. The dinner and ball in its honor was presided over by Karl von Habsburg, the Archduke and heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His appearance at the event was unconventional to be sure. When think tanks have dinners, according to D.C. rules, they are supposed to invite politicians, bureaucrats, central bankers, media commentators, and Hollywood personas.

But a leading member of a deposed royal family who has neither political power nor media clout? It breaks all the rules, as the Mises Institute does quite often.

The old Austria was freer than today's p.c. D.C.

Criticism was to be expected. But the hysterical rant against the Habsburg Empire by Tom G. Palmer of the Cato Institute, printed in *Liberty* magazine, is utterly mystifying. Though his polemic may be attributed to Beltway antipathy, the venomous charges against Franz Josef and his tottering empire beg for explanation. Why, outside of ultra-nationalist Serbs (who contributed, *pace* Palmer, to starting the First World War), would anyone try to revive this dated anti-Habsburg brief?

"The scholar Oscar Jazsi," whose sour judgment, served up in *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, is cited by Palmer, was a radical socialist when he condemned the "illiberalism" of Franz Josef. Jazsi openly agitated against the Habsburgs during the war, something for which he suffered no inconvenience. A death sentence would have surely awaited him for less treasonous conduct in Clemenceau's France, Lloyd George's England, or in other authorized centers of Palmerian liberal democracy.

The "idiotic war" in 1914 was not "occasioned by the Emperor's imperialistic grab for Bosnia," a territory which Austria had occupied in 1878 and then, annexed in 1908. Moreover, Austrian sabre-rattling was more than matched by the Serbian-Russian support thrown to South-Slav terrorists at the turn of the century. The extent of Serbian-Russian provocation, culminating in the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in June 1914, was already heavily documented seventy years ago. The historian Sidney Faye furnished evidence of this terrorist connection, known to both the Allies and the Austrian imperial government, in historical studies of the 1920s.

Palmer offers other unsubstantiated accusations in his brief. The picture drawn of Franz Josef inciting the "slaughter of the Hungarian classical liberal revolutionaries" of 1848-49 is sheer nonsense. The Hungarian revolutionaries were not, for the most part, classical liberals. They were landowning nationalists, who, like Lajos Kossuth, had no desire to extend self-rule to Slovakians and Croatians, and least of all to their own non-Magyar tenant farmers. Nor did Franz Josef, still a teenager in 1848, preside. An older, distant relative, Felix von Schwarzenberg, took charge of the government after the previous emperor, the mentally incompetent Ferdinand II, fled Vienna, then in the throes of revolution. Schwarzenberg and a colleague, Alexander von Bach, continued to run Austrian affairs until the mid-1850s, when Franz Josef assumed direct executive power.

Though Carl Menger's Austria was arguably a less intrusive state than Palmer's p.c. America, no one would

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suggest it embodied all the high ideals of the Western liberal tradition. Nineteenth-century Austrian administrations were often corrupt, like the coalition of Edward Taaffe in the 1880s, which put together a parliamentary majority of disgruntled national minorities, clericalists, and any other block Taaffe could bribe into backing his government. But the corruption in Austrian parliamentary politics was that of big-city bosses in the U.S. and not of the uncontrolled bureaucratic dictators who today run the IRS and BATF.

Much to the disgust of Adolf Hitler, the Habsburg Empire *protected* ethnic minorities, at least in the Austrian sectors, marginalized anti-Semitic nationalists, particularly German ones, and generously "ennobled" Jewish backers, among them the elder Mises. From the mid-1890s on, the imperial family expressed public support for classical liberal economies. Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, who, like Carl Menger, was a close friend of the Habsburgs, assumed the ministry of economics and in 1896 introduced fiscal reforms such as vigorously cutting government spending. Menger was made a life member of the House of Lords.

Needless to say, no one maintains that the Habsburg Empire was truly well suited for these reforms. Faced by national animosities and by the difficulty of accommodating mutually hostile subject nationalities, the imperial government maneuvered by playing off and appeasing ethnic blocs.

The suppression of the Hungarian secessionists in 1849 was followed by a division of power with the Magyars in 1867, but this only opened the door to further grievances from the Hungarians and from other nationalities, particularly those whom the Hungarians were trying to assimilate in their part of the Empire. And since these nationalities were often intermingled (most famously in Transylvania, the Batschka, Istria, and Bohemia), it was difficult to identify some regions with a single dominant nationality. The now dead historian Robert Kann, who was both a federalist and a Habsburg sympathizer, devoted his life to telling this story.

But for the imperial family, classical-liberal economics became what the Catholic faith had been during the Counter-reformation, a unifying force in a multinational empire. Peaceful commercial growth and increased trade among nationalities with a politically linked Central Europe remained the hope not only of Menger, Böhm-Bawerk, Friedrich Wieser, Joseph Schumpeter, Mises, and other Austrian economists but of the dynasty itself.

From Menger through Wieser the fathers of the Austrian School of economics enjoyed imperial patronage.

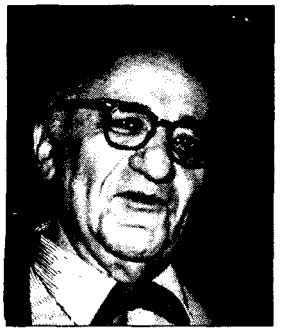
Franz Josef hired Menger as a tutor for the ill-fated Crown Prince, Rudolf, and later, as Schumpeter explains in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, he persuaded Böhm-Bawerk to leave the University of Innsbruck to reform the imperial economy. Note that from Menger through Wieser the fathers of the Austrian School of economics enjoyed imperial patronage, a fact that contributed to their holding of academic honors.

The Archduke Otto (the current claimant to the imperial dignity) is an outspoken classical liberal and a renowned legal scholar who taught at Louvain. He was also a close friend of Mises, who never expressed second thoughts about his own military support of the imperial cause. In the forties Mises provided Otto, as noted by Margit von Mises, with a plan for reconstructing the Empire.

Though a constitutional republican in the U.S., Mises felt no inconsistency about advocating a Habsburg restoration in Central Europe. *Liberty*'s editor wonders that Rockwell would "link one of history's great libertarians to a reactionary empire." This linkage was not invented by Lew Rockwell; it was one that Mises accepted throughout his life.

The most problematic passage in Palmer's screed is the one that the editor highlights: "Serving as a soldier in a conscripted imperial army at war with the U.S., France, and Britain is hardly the prudent movement in a great liberal's life, and certainly an odd one to celebrate." Palmer's statement is so

Dean of the Austrian School of economics, American historian, founder of modern libertarianism, and restorer of the Old Right, Murray N. Rothbard (1926–1995) was a one-man army of liberty. The *Triple R* is inspired by his spirit, and dedicated to his vision.



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misleading that one hardly knows where to start making corrections.

First, the "Allies" were at war only indirectly with Austria, which was fighting mostly against Russia, Serbia, Italy, and Romania. It was Austria's ally, Imperial Germany, whom Britain, France, and eventually the U.S. (by its own volition) targeted as the major foe. Some Allied leaders like Churchill were genuinely upset to be even formally at war with Austria-Hungary (in Churchill's case because his mother was having an affair with an Austrian count and military commander).

Palmer makes much of the fact that the imperial army was "conscripted," but so were the others, and it is hard to justify the singling out of Mises's side for special blame. Apparently Mises did not serve in that army merely as a drudge, but unlike Palmer, actually admired the Empire and thought it was worth defending.

Perhaps Palmer would be even more offended to know that, like Mises and four of my uncles who followed his course, I can fully understand this loyalty to a weakened Habsburg empire that had stumbled into a war for which it was ill-prepared. Like Mises and his father, my uncles were Austrian Jews who had risen in the services of a benevolent sovereign. And it didn't matter to them (and would not have to me) who happened to be on the other side of the alliance system, if the enemies were able and willing to crush one's own country.

In this case, unfortunately they were, and despite the attempt of the Austrian Emperor Karl IV to pull his battered country out of the war, the "democratic" Allies were determined not to allow this to happen. By 1915 Austria-Hungary had already been divided and given out as war booty, at least on paper, to allies and prospective allies of the British.

As for America being against the Empire, it was Woodrow Wilson who saw to that, with congressional cooperation. The Imperial Austrian government had no interest in making or even declaring war on the U.S.; hostilities occurred because of the decidedly non-classical liberal American administration of our first global democrat.

Though Austria-Hungary was no threat to the U.S., like other global-democratic imperialists, Wilson thought it deserved to be eviscerated for not conforming to his notion of how governments should operate. Yet the attack on civil liberties and critics of the war launched by the Wilson tyranny was far worse than any which took place under Austrian or German "reactionaries." If Palmer is surprised that Mises and his followers honor the Habsburg Empire, his whitewashing of Austria's enemies has even less to do with classical-liberal values. It betrays a democratic imperialist, and not a liberal heritage.

Finally, allow me to note that Palmer's view of the Allies as a touchstone of political virtue is totally inconsistent with the American "liberal" tradition he and his magazine claim to represent. The once solemnly assured me that his political views came from Senator Robert Taft, including presumably Taft's critical views of American participation in World War One.

Though Taft served in the war, he came to believe that America's belligerent involvement in the European struggle subverted constitutional restraints while doing nothing to contribute to a just peace. This involvement also came about because of duplicity on the part of Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing, and it was consciously and vociferously used to promote the expansion of public administration by Wilson's advisors and staff.

If Mises is to be criticized for his engagement as a Habsburg loyalist, *Liberty*'s Wilsonianism cannot be excused by any friend of actual liberty. One must inevitably conclude after reading Palmer's and the editor's comments that they too have now arrived. Anti-monarchism is in season again with the fashionable crowd. Neocon columnists Steve Chapman, Don Feder, and George Will have just delivered invectives against the "infantilism" of English and other royalty. Certainly they, and the rest of the journalistic establishment, would be proud of *Liberty*'s blow for democratic maturity. RRR

SENSE FROM THE SAND SPIDER

Michael Levin

Movies supposedly mirror an amorphous quality called the "national mood" or what Americans think, or what they should be thinking, or perhaps what the cultural elite would like them to think. Often the messages are right out there, sometimes they're subtle, and occasionally they contravene their creators' own intentions.

One film I recently saw, *Courage Under Fire,* belongs to the hit-'em-over-the-head school. When I say I saw it I mean that literally: it was the in-flight feature on a trip to the west coast, and I would be darned before I paid for headphones to listen to what I assumed (as it turned out correctly) would be a propaganda piece. Fortunately, its plotting is so predictable

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that I was pretty much able to surmise what the characters were up to without having to hear what they said, as I later verified from reviews of the movie.

Courage was hailed when it appeared as a reversion to the old John Wayne spirit, but it is not. It is more like a morphing of that spirit into a weird Döppelganger, as if the villains in a *Gunsmoke* episode were being routed by a gung-ho Chester and Miss Kitty while Marshall Dillon dithered in the background.

The story opens during Desert Storm, with American forces relentlessly mowing down Iraqi soldiers. In the confusion of battle, heroic tank commander Denzel Washington mistakenly targets a friendly tank, killing several Americans. This troubles him badly; you can tell, because back stateside he lies awake in bed. Incidentally, no white is shown to exhibit anything resembling a conscience.

Deep in his funk, he is given an important assignment. The Department of Defense wants to award helicopter pilot Meg Ryan a posthumous Congressional Medal of Honor, making her the first female so honored, but there is some uncertainty about how she died. Captain Denzel must find out what really happened (shades of *Rashomon*), principally by investigating the men she rescued on her last mission—a group of white lummoxes led by Lou Diamond Phillips.

The rest of the story is told mainly in flashbacks. We first meet Commander Ryan doing calisthenics as her little daughter looks on, so we know right away she is (a) dedicated and (b) not a lesbian. Next we see her in the thick of combat, landing her chopper to rescue Phillips and his buddies from a dicey situation. As the bits of narrative coalesce, it becomes clear that she took a bullet but fights on, and stood her ground even as the white males are saved by another extraction team. She and all traces of what has happened are incinerated in a final cataclysm as the men look stupidly on, with their jaws literally dropping open.

The climactic revelation seems to occur in a locker room, with Denzel in uniform and Phillips in an undershirt. Phillips is well-built, so I could not tell whether the director wanted to show off the actor's muscles or emphasize the brutishness of white males. In any case, Phillips is so embarrassed by the prospect of the truth coming out that he immediately drives his car headlong into a freight train (whose engineer was surely ignoring Department of Transportation safety regs about suicidal Marines).

Sand Spider to U.S.: "You have occupied our countries, bombed our defenseless women and children."

Denzel, having done right, can now get some sleep. And is justice done to Meg? Can a hungry bear win a salmon-eating contest? The last scene has Denzel placing a Congressional Medal of Honor on her tombstone.

Desert Storm also makes its way, although less directly and not by name, into the Arnold Schwartzenegger extravaganza *True Lies*. *Lies* is played mostly for laughs and is quite enjoyable, despite the piling on of crescendos that has become inevitable in the action-adventure genre. Nonetheless it has a few disquieting moments.

Arnold belongs to a supersecret antiterrorist government organization, although his wife believes he sells computers, the source of an engaging subplot. As the action begins he is on the trail of the Islamic Jihad, led by a figure calling himself the Sand Spider. (When asked why he chose that odd name, somebody speculates "Maybe he thought it sounded scary.") Exasperated by Arnold's relentless pursuit, the Jihad kidnaps him and his wife to an isolated island in the Florida Keys, where they have also secreted four atomic warheads stolen from the former Soviet Union.

Here the Spider videotapes a message to the United States. "You have occupied our countries, bombed our defenseless women and children," he begins, going on to promise the destruction of American cities until other Jihadists are released from prison and "the U.S. removes its warships from the Persian Gulf and leaves that part of the world." At this point the batteries in the terrorists' videocam run down, leaving the Spider to fume comically at his underlings. Not long after, Arnold takes the offensive, saving millions of lives by wiping out the baddies.

But let us look past the low humor and the boilerplate about imprisoned comrades to the striking modesty of the Spider's central demand. In itself it is perfectly reasonable. He wants neither material gain nor self-aggrandizement, only that the U.S. leave his part of the world alone. He shouldn't threaten innocent people—although without such threats there is no movie—but his anger is also reasonable. I remember in particular Iraq accusing the U.S. of bombing a shelter for women and children, and killing every occupant, a charge never to my knowledge denied. Didn't anyone involved with *Lies* realize that some part of the audience might think "Hey, that guy has a point"? I don't know.

What the writers do not do is answer the indictment with the sort of

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upbeat defense of America that punctuated older war movies. They must have known that talk about "drawing a line against aggressors" would ring hollow, given the number of aggressors in the world we don't go after. Nor did they dare trot out "Hussein's invasion of Kuwait threatened America's supply of oil," which is morally ambiguous at best. Kuwait's oil does not belong to Hussein, but it does not belong to us either. If somebody tries to steal your TV set, you have a right to repel him with deadly force, but I don't. What I should do is call the cops. The absence of a supernational 911 number–a boon for individual liberty–also means that the United States must butt out when nations with whom it is in sympathy suffer at the hands of third parties.

Not that summer blockbusters are apt to dwell on economics, but even the amorally self-serving plea "we need that oil" would not have washed. Decreased availability of a previously plentiful resource simply drives its price up, leading to its more efficient use along with deployment of substitutes. If gasoline suddenly became scarcer, Americans would drive less, eat at home instead of McDonald's, and walk instead of automatically climbing into the car.

Nor is it likely that Hussein, had he grabbed all the oil in the Mideast, would hoard it out of vindictiveness. After all, the only reason to control a highly-valued resource is to sell it. And not at so-called "extortionate" prices, either. Hussein-brand oil going for $5 million a barrel would attract few buyers, especially as competitors like Nigeria charged less. It would stay in the ground, as useless to Baghdad as to us. Indeed, if Iraqi engineers could not extract conquered oil efficiently, they might have to ask American firms to do it more cheaply.

The moral issues ignored in *Courage* and raised in passing in *Lies* are aired more explicitly in the recent *Air Force One*. Lamentably, it argues in effect that every aggressor in the world is America's business.

The U.S. president also kills people, but "doesn't shoot them; he wears a tuxedo, picks up the telephone, and calls in smart bombs.

The movie opens bluntly as American paratroopers armed with high-tech weapons burst into a palatial building in Kazakhstan, kill all the guards and drag off Kazakhstan's new leader, General Radek. This grabs the audience, but once again has–I hope–the incidental effect of making it ask what the hell American soldiers are doing in a foreign country kidnapping its head of state.

Matters are explained in a very Wilsonian speech given the next night at the Kremlin by President Harrison Ford. "Real peace," he asserts in a phrase lifted from Martin Luther King, "is not just the absence of conflict but the presence of justice." That's funny; I thought peace *was* the absence of conflict. He goes on to explain: thanks to a joint Russian-American surgical strike, Radek, responsible for "genocide against 200,000 of his own people," now resides in a Russian prison. (By this point it should be obvious that "Kazakhstan" is the movie's version of Bosnia.) Ford then promises the world more of the same, proclaiming that America will no longer do things because they are "popular," but because they are "moral." In other words, we will indeed make every bad guy in the world our business.

Leaving Moscow in triumph, the President along with his wife and daughter boards his eponymous airplane for the flight home. But trouble lurks as six Radek loyalists gain entree to it in the guise of Russian newsmen. With the unexplained assistance of part of the President's Secret Service detail, they take over Air Force One and threaten to kill everyone on board unless the General is released. Much hugger-mugger ensues, as Ford eventually kills all the hijackers singlehandedly. As a bonus, Radek also dies in a hail of bullets elsewhere.

Every detail of the story is politically correct. A black secretary figures out how to get a message off the plane; a black general devises the daring mid-air rescue. The firm yet compassionate Vice President is female. Yet despite the preachment, the explosions, and Ford's star preening, the heart of the film is Gary Oldman's overwhelming portrayal of the Kazakhstani ringleader. No supervillain, he is a real, recognizable, and bitterly angry human being. It must have been especially difficult for Oldman to bring this off, given the incoherence of his character, who is not only a veteran of Afghanistan, a communist and a nationalist–socialism in one country, anybody?–but a Kazakhstani nationalist who deplores the decline of mother Russia.

For all that, his outrage at what the U.S. has just done to his country is wholly convincing. In one astonishing scene, Oldman, beside himself with contempt, spits in the President's face.

As in *True Lies* but more so, the attempt to motivate the bad guy's behavior gets out of hand. The President's wife and daughter remonstrate with

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Oldman about his having killed one of the hostages. "Your father also kills people," he tells the girl; "he doesn't shoot them; he wears a tuxedo, picks up the telephone, and calls in smart bombs." The first lady calls Oldman a murderer. He snorts and replies, accurately, "You murdered 100,000 Iraqis to save a nickel on a gallon of gas." Now, what refutation of these canards do America's spokeswomen come up with? The President's 12-year-old daughter calls him names: "You're not like my father at all. You're a monster." And there the scene ends.

"You murdered 100,000 Iraqis to save a nickel on a gallon of gas."

I can't imagine anyone thinking this is decisive. More likely it was the best the writers could manage, given the historical facts. I would like to think they knew Oldman's line could not be answered, and left it in as "hidden doctrine," food for thought for those who notice. One small further bit of evidence of subversiveness is that Oldman's chief henchman is named Nevsky. This name might have been picked simply because it sounds Russian, but Alexander Nevsky was the medieval Russian folk hero who repelled the Teutonic Knights, and also the subject of an Eisenstein film surely familiar to most writers, producers, and directors in Hollywood.

The press has explained audience enthusiasm for *Air Force One* as a yearning for a "decisive," "principled" President, unlike the one they have. I don't know why people say this about Clinton; he is very determined when he wants to be. He is defending affirmative action to the last ditch, and never misses a chance to side against whites. No doubt he does think he is doing what is "right" rather than "popular," which just shows how dangerous it is for men with too much power to get on their high horse.

So what do we learn from these movies? In one sense, *Courage Under Fire* is a sign that post-Vietnam defeatism has been replaced by renewed confidence in America's military might. But the movie's real text as I see it is that it is OK to kill as many Iraqis or anybody else as possible *so long as the killing is done by blacks and females.* Not only are the toughest yet most honorable figures a black and a female, this fact itself is treated as entirely unremarkable. Critics, I might add, fell in with this pretense, scarcely mentioning Denzel Washington's race and referring to Meg Ryan's gender only to explain the plot. The whole idea is to pretend this circumstance is unremarkable, a non-issue. "The warriors are black and female? You don't say. I hadn't even noticed."

True Lies and *Air Force One* teach a subtler lesson. Artists, it is said, don't always fully understand what they are doing. Satan is the villain of Milton's *Paradise Lost,* but he is by far the most interesting character, as Shelley pointed out. So here. Many movie-makers want to create exciting fantasies that also make people proud to be Americans. But they must also choose protagonists and antagonists that permit the suspension of disbelief, which requires some respect for the realities that today's sophisticated audiences know exist. Villains must come from the enemies we actually have, and have plausible motives. Some of these motives are a little too convincing, and putting them on the screen inadvertently gives moviegoers more to think about than explosions and chases. RRR

DIRT CHEAP

Robert Weissberg

Solutions to the Israel-Arab conflict have proven illusive. Even formal peace accords, complete with formal ceremonies and treaties, are generally understood as gestures of hope. At best, progress is painfully slow and fragile, optimism is a government prescribed policy, not a genuinely felt emotion. Every President since Harry Truman has had a plan, offered his good offices, even held out various bribes but with limited success, at best.

Nor have four major wars, over a dozen changes of leadership and endless diplomatic negotiations created the permanent dull normal state of peace. Liberal solutions, conservative solutions, hard-line solutions, and pie-in-the-sky solutions have only served as palliative resolutions.

The situation is not, however, hopeless. Indeed, when examined from a wholly different perspective, the problem is quite solvable without a decisive war, bitter enemies learning to love one another, billions in bribes, or Messianic intervention. It is even a solution that has been tried and perfected within the United States on occasions too numerous to count. There is no new technology needed, no disputes over who really represents whom and, most important, it is a solution with no economic or political losers.

The solution begins by recognizing the essential character of the Israel-Arab dispute. Reduced to its core, it is the familiar one of demand for land outstripping the available supply. Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt all want the same land and are

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not willing to renounce their claims. In a rational capitalistic system this problem is solved by the market: one party outbids all the others, and this is accepted by the losers as legitimate. Disappointed bidders do not take up arms; their reaction is the familiar "If those idiots want to pay over a $100 a foot, let them have it." Unfortunately for the cause of peace, this rational bidding process does not work when sovereign nations contest land.

Then what is to be done? The answer is obvious—reduce the value of the land. If the West Bank, Golan Heights, Gaza, and all the other disputed territory were just about worthless, the Israel-Arab conflict would cease to exist. The real problem, then, is not how to divide-up over-priced land. The problem is to restore a more realistic price to a dangerous game in which too much treasure chases too little of non-economic value.

W.C. Fields used to say that forsaking booze is easy—I've done it a thousand times. The government in Washington likewise has no problem devaluing land. It, too, has done it thousands of times. The "secret" is public housing. Just as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, putting a massive public housing project on any piece of property will dramatically lower the value of surrounding land. The record here is unequaled and unquestioned. When massive public housing projects filled with the normal tenants are strategically positioned in the Middle East, land values will return to their pre-Roman days, while the passion for thy neighbor's real estate will go limp.

This new and improved resettlement of the occupied territories will be a snap compared to the older diplomacy. First, Israel and its neighbors will be offered a wonderful package—the U.S. government will take out a long-term lease, with a nice yearly payment, on border land presently occupied by landmines, barbed-wired fences, and security posts. Land will also be leased near belligerent settlers and professional malcontents. Hundreds of thousands of modern, high-rise housing units will be constructed for future American residents using local labor and companies to be paid on a U.S. wage scale.

All the governments in the area will suddenly discover that these housing projects sit on land historically belonging to someone else.

This economic windfall will be hard to resist, and the political opposition will also be minimal since Jews will not be moving into Arab territory and vice versa. Nor will anyone be displaced save some border guards. The prospect of a large permanent colony of "rich Americans" will also appeal in a region famous for its ability to separate tourists from their money. Between all the construction money and the wait for the rich Americans, the mood will be one of euphoria.

Meanwhile, residents permanently on welfare and living in depressing, dreary Soviet-style housing projects in New York, Chicago, and Detroit will be given color brochures about life in the sunny Middle East, the original Paradise, the Garden of Eden, the land of milk and honey, where it never gets cold and the beaches are just minutes away. "Why live in Detroit and pay rent when you can live like a Sheik for free in the land of Cleopatra?"

A extra-special effort will be made to recruit anti-social types and those with long criminal records. Perhaps resettlement will be offered as an alternative to prison. Ads will play up the Exodus theme, a chance to begin life afresh in the land of the Bible, and the possibilities of economic growth in an area famous for its vast wealth. At least a half-million public housing residents addicted to the dole will quickly be signed up for the Promised Land, perhaps more.

Within a year's time, one of the world's great feats of immigration will be complete. The media will be filled with stories of former slum dwellers with no prospects of employment in the U.S. singing and dancing with joy as they enter the Promised Land. Once desolate security zones will be packed with laughing children and happy mothers. Those left behind in America will no doubt try to join their more fortunate friends and relatives, even risking clandestine immigration, and the population of the New Detroits and the New Philadelphias will multiply.

At first glance, this plan seems like yet another outlandish waste of tax money—the cost of the housing, the lease on Middle East land, transportation, and the marketing may run a few billion a year. It also smacks of foreign aid to a region that has already absorbed a disproportionate share of assistance. Perhaps even worse, the presence of U.S. citizens could easily involve us even more deeply in the region's bizarre politics or a war. Surely, our goal should be disengagement, not permanent physical involvement.

These are reasonable objections, but they are far outweighed by the benefits, economic, political and military. First, it is inevitable that conditions in these new Middle East housing projects will soon return to the familiar state—street crime, drug dealings, random violence, and general physical deterioration will occur

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despite the best efforts of the authorities and handsome social welfare budgets. Documentation on "The Dream That Became a Nightmare" will become a staple on PBS. The New Detroit will soon look just like portions of the old Detroit.

Equally predictable, all the governments in the area will suddenly discover that these housing projects sit on land historically belonging to someone else. Biblical scholars in Israel, for example, will uncover new maps of ancient Judea depicting a somewhat diminished Kingdom. Yasser Arafat, in a remarkable display of moderation and vision, will proclaim that a Palestinian homeland in the south of France is acceptable. Various Sheiks and dictators will suddenly announce that because of their own needs they will refuse to finance harebrained schemes to drive Israel into the sea; the Zionists can keep their ill-gotten gains. In short, a diplomatic problem that has occupied an enormous amount of our energy will be solved.

Second, Israel will now have the military security that it has always wanted at an incredibly cheap cost. No Arab army or band of terrorists, no matter how well-armed or fanatical, would dare seek to penetrate 20 miles of U.S.-style public housing. A Syrian incursion to reclaim the Golan Heights would get mugged while their Soviet tanks would be quickly reduced to spare parts to be sold back to the government. Roving gangs of teenagers are taken far more seriously than lightly armed UN peace keepers from Ireland or Norway. Indeed, a prudent Syrian government will never risk keeping soldiers within ten miles of the border and these troops would mutiny if ordered into night combat. The Israeli Army could be cut in half and its citizens would no longer fear invasion. Israeli politics would become more civil and a quarter of the GNP would no longer have to be spent on military protection.

Third, the quality of urban American life would be much improved. Huge areas of the city once "off-limits" now would become available for housing and industry. Parks and public transportation would again become public. Middle-class families would again find city life attractive. The costs of doing business—insurance, security, the paying of combat zone wages—would fall. Tourists might even return to New York City. Expenditures for police, fire protection and the like would be reduced substantially since the cost of maintaining the urban underclass in the Middle East would surely be a fraction of what it is in the U.S. Far more important, the psychological benefits of fewer gangs, drug dealers, and muggers are profound. Once again, city life would make one free.

In sum, what we have is a classical instance of what is terrible in one context is wonderful in another. In the United States the reduction of land value is unfortunate; in the Middle East it is like the Messiah bringing peace. In the U.S. public housing is an urban blight with far reaching negative consequences; in the Middle East it is a boon, bringing economic benefits, security and a cessation of hostilities once believed incurable. Our solution is also cost-effective—it is not just cheap, it is dirt cheap. RRR

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